

10. International Relations after the Second World War.

A New Understanding of the Cold War? (1945–1990)

Journalists and scholars from all over the world, especially from the United States and other Western countries, have written thousands of books and essays in the last half century on the Cold War; on its causes, structure, and course; on its history-changing highlights and its main actors; on its missed alternatives and the catastrophes that were prevented by it. The historiographical situation is beginning to resemble the historical interpretation of older major world events, such as interpretations of the Fall of Rome, the Reformation, the American, French, or Russian Revolutions, World Wars I and II, and National Socialism. In these cases, anyone who makes a bold attempt to bring himself up to the so-called state of research on the basis of a representative reading list can easily resign himself: He is drawn into a bewildering plethora of interpretations, revisions, and revisions of revisions. He occasionally notices calm, very often old wine in new bottles, even an end of the debate due to exhaustion and disinterest, and, finally, the onward march of the caravan of interpreters. However, as with the Cold War, it is also the case that a revitalization of the discussion through new sources and new questions can occur.

Occasionally, the perplexed student finds an astute mind like the Berlin historian of antiquity, Alexander Demandt, who, at the end of his interpretation of the dissolution of the Roman Empire from Augustine to Mommsen and Jones, compiled an alphabetical list of 210 causal factors that have so far been held responsible for the decline of the Roman Empire. But, not to worry, we are not quite so far in the case of the Cold War. But, it must be noted that, already 15 years ago, together with my students, I effortlessly compiled a small selection of a good 50 factors, which in research up to that time had in some way been held responsible for the causes of the Cold War. 14 causal factors related to Stalin and the Soviet system, 26 to Roosevelt, Truman, and

First published in: Die internationalen Beziehungen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Ein neues Verständnis des Kalten Krieges?, in: Hans-Hermann Hertle/Konrad H. Jarausch/Christoph Kleßmann (eds.): Mauerbau und Mauerfall. Ursachen, Verlauf, Auswirkungen. Christoph Links Verlag. Potsdam 2002, pp. 19–31.

the American system, while 14 were more concerned with structural problems involving both sides, such as the dynamics of mutual perceptions and misperceptions, the escalating action-reaction mechanism, with the classic security dilemma, with power vacuums in Europe and Asia, the laws of political gravity and geopolitics, and the inevitable conflicts that must arise from a bipolar structure of international relations. I myself now tend to explain the Cold War primarily in terms of these structural factors. One consequence of this for me is the conclusion that neither side planned nor wanted the Cold War; it simply happened.

From this confusing abundance of interpretations, it is only a small step to epistemological relativism; namely, to the recognition that radical philosophical hermeneutics is right in its judgment of the fundamental historicity, lifeworld-bound locationality, and thus subjectivity of every historical statement. For such a skeptical position, Cold War historians themselves, it seems, provide the best arguments in three ways.

First, in all countries with some historiographical tradition, they publish contributions to the history of Cold War studies, reviewing successive directions, currents, schools, and interpretations. An analysis of the contributions of the journal *Diplomatic History* from 1977 to the present is particularly instructive in this regard. The standard division of U.S. historians on the Cold War is: orthodoxy of the 1950s, revisionism of the 1960s and 1970s, postrevisionism of the 1980s, a new, open, and confusing situation after the end of the Cold War and selective access to new sources from the former empires of Stalin and Mao. The second attempt by John Lewis Gaddis, for example, to state what “we know now” has met with criticism, as has his first attempt at a postrevisionist synthesis in the early eighties.¹

Secondly, the reasons given for the emergence of a new school or a new interpretation are very often not based on new sources, nor on neglected causal connections, but as the change in real history itself; that is, in the lifeworld and prejudice structure of the next generation of historians. For example, the standard division just mentioned is

1 Cf. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Oxford 1997; the same, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947*, New York 1972; the same, *The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War*, *Diplomatic History* 7 (Summer 1983), pp. 171–190. For discussion of the new synthesis, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *What Do “We Now Know”?* In: *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 2, April 1999, pp. 501–524.

constantly referred back to the early Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement, and the politics of *détente*. I do not even want to talk about the principle of partisanship in the totalitarian communist states, which forced historians, as administrators and interpreters of dogmatic world views, to constantly rewrite and falsify research, and punished deviations from the respective “party line” with sanctions.

Thirdly, the different interpretations by historians are not infrequently given political-ideological labels, as if the historians themselves, as Goethe said, wanted to leave no doubt that it is really the gentlemen’s, today also the ladies’, own spirit in which the times are reflected. Thus, a recent comprehensive history of the United States, under the title “Why Historians Disagree?” states laconically: “Social, racial, ethnic, and sexual differences among historians all contribute to the expression of different views.”²

So what were the wise planners of this volume thinking when they gave me the honorable task of reflecting on “a new understanding of the Cold War”—with a question mark? Hopefully, they did not expect me, in the grand sweep of a few pages, to summarize into a new synthesis the many individual results of the research that has been done the last ten years; for example, the exemplarily work carried out at the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D. C. Even less could one be expected to contrast these with the interpretive endeavors of the preceding 40 years, and then to ask critically whether there really is such a thing as a new understanding of Cold War international relations. Such a new synthesis, such a “master narrative” does not exist, and, moreover, according to postmodern insight, cannot exist at all. In his argument with John Lewis Gaddis, for example, Melvin P. Leffler consulted more than 200 new publications for his attempt to propose such a synthesis only for the initial phase of the Cold War.³

By now the reader will expect the inevitable modesty topos of an overtaxed historian who must try to reduce the horizon of expectation. I cannot and do not want to offer a new synthesis, but rather to cut three paths through the jungle of possible interpretations of the Cold War, using the leitmotif of globalism.

2 Richard N. Current / T. Harry Williams / Frank Freidel / Alan Brinkley, *Why Historians Disagree*, in: *American History*, 7, New York 1987, p. 64.

3 Cf. Leffler, *What Do “We Now Know?”* pp. 501–524.

My first leitmotif is the question of the global reach, the global scope of activity of the two superpowers in the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union; the second asks about the importance of Asia, Africa, and Latin America for the intensification, prolongation, and globalization of the Cold War; and with my third leitmotif I would like to suggest that the year 1968 should also be accepted in international relations as a global turning point of the Cold War.

If there is such a thing as a *prima causa* in complex historical processes at all, then for me the—unintended—*prima causa* of the Cold War lies in the globalization of the USA's scope of activity in foreign policy, which in turn is rooted in the globalization of American interests and values. This globalization is the primary cause of the qualitative leap of the U.S. from being a world power among other world powers to being the superpower of the Cold War and the nuclear age. By globalization I mean that, in principle, the future of the entire world, especially the Eurasian double continent, including the Middle East, was of potentially vital importance to the United States. Not only the structural East-West conflict, but also its regressive and militant form, the Cold War, cannot be explained without this American globalism.

It has often been said that the partly covert, partly overt world civil war of the 20th century began already in 1917 when the two great revolutionaries, Lenin and Wilson, proclaimed antagonistic models for the whole world. But it took the challenge of the Axis powers and Japan in the 1930s and an almost Homeric struggle between the so-called isolationists and internationalists in U.S. domestic policy from 1937–1941 to anchor U.S. globalism permanently in the minds, institutions, foreign policy strategies, and maxims of the country. It was not the post-1945 disappointment with the collapse of universalist postwar planning during the war, but the eventual U.S. entry into World War II that resolved the fundamental contradiction of U.S. foreign policy in the interwar period: the contradiction between the U.S. economic, and to some extent cultural, presence in Europe and Asia on the one hand, and the absence of its military footprint and political alliances on the other.

President F. D. Roosevelt formulated, as it were, the leitmotif of 20th century Pax Americana on January 21, 1941, when he wrote to the U.S. ambassador to Japan: “I believe the fundamental task is to recognize that the struggles in Europe, in Africa, and in Asia are all parts of a single world conflict. We must therefore recognize that our interests are threatened in Europe and in Asia. We are committed to the task

of defending our way of life and our vital interests wherever they are seriously threatened. Our strategy of self-defense, taking into account every front and seizing every opportunity to contribute to our total security, must therefore be global.”⁴

Secretary of State Dean Rusk meant the same thing when he exclaimed in 1965, “We have to take care of everything, all the lands, waters, atmosphere, and space surrounding us.”⁵

It is clearly no coincidence that this globalism is the essence of all major U.S. strategic plans and security memoranda from 1941 to the present. This includes everything from “ABC-1,” “Rainbow-5,” and the “Victory Program” from 1941, which formulated a military concept of defense, war, and victory—a kind of global forward defense, in which the difference between defensive and offensive in the geographic sense was blurred beyond recognition—to Memorandum NSC 68 from 1950 and the National Intelligence Council’s global strategic situation assessment “Global Trends 2015” from that year.⁶

This globalization is rooted in the internal conditions of the USA, in the power and flexibility of its institutions, the growing economic and military strength of the country, but also in the Manichaeism of the American civil religion. On the one hand, this civil religion produced the necessary enemy images again and again; on the other hand, it is responsible for the delimitation and universalization of the American mission of freedom, for the mission of making the world safe for democracy.

But the globalization of the American foreign policy scope of activity also grew out of the increasing interdependence of world politics in the 20th century itself, as well as being a reaction to the foreign policies of enemies and allies of the United States, especially out of the, often exaggerated, threat perceptions that the deeds and ideologies of other states and societies evoked in the minds of Americans and their politicians. Thus, since the beginning of this century, there has been an almost unbroken continuity of exaggeration of the perceived security threat to the Western Hemisphere. Within this American globalism,

4 Joseph C. Grew, *Ten Years in Japan. A Contemporary Record Drawn from the Diaries and Official Papers of J. C. Grew*, New York 1941, p. 359. See also: Detlef Junker, *Der unteilbare Weltmarkt. Das ökonomische Interesse in der Außenpolitik der USA, 1933–1941*, Stuttgart 1975.

5 Cited in: Paul M. Kennedy, *Aufstieg und Fall der großen Mächte. Ökonomischer Wandel und militärische Konflikte von 1500–2000*, Frankfurt / Main 1991, p. 136.

6 On strategic globalism, see Detlef Junker, *Von der Weltmacht zur Supermacht. American Foreign Policy in the 20th Century*, Mannheim 1995.

one can distinguish three major objectives, which, however, have not always stood side by side with equal weight: The indivisible, liberal-capitalist world market; indivisible security, that is, the maintenance of a pro-American balance in the world and the prevention of hostile hegemonic powers on the Eurasian double continent that might, in the long run, threaten the security of the Western Hemisphere, taken as the sanctuary of the United States; and indivisible freedom, that is, the global imperative to promote, demand, and support democracy and representative governments resulting from free elections.

As already indicated, these global objectives of the United States were dialectically connected with global threat scenarios; in the case of the Cold War, with the subjective certainty that communism, first in Europe and Asia, and after the globalization of Soviet foreign policy in the era of Khrushchev, also in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, would endanger all three indivisibilities.

Only in the early 1970s did Nixon and Kissinger once try to liberate Americans from Manichaeism and give them back, of all things, that concept of international relations from which President Wilson wanted to liberate the world, at least rhetorically: the concept of the balance of powers. The best that could be expected in the international world of states—namely, not eternal peace, but medium-term stability of the system—could be guaranteed, Kissinger argued, only if the existence of the main powers, regardless of their respective internal orders, was recognized as legitimate. The entire criticism of Nixon and Kissinger lives on the argument that these two men betrayed America's best tradition through naked realpolitik and through secret politics.

This U.S. globalism, it should be mentioned, has produced global methods and maxims of action. One need only recall the multilateral alliances (NATO, SEATO, ANZUS, CENTO, Rio Pact) and bilateral alliances, the worldwide bases, the ability of the US Air Force and Navy to project power globally, the global military and economic aid, the globally operating secret services, last but not least the global destructive power of US nuclear weapons; or the global Munich analogy (no Munich in Europe and Asia), the Truman Doctrine, or the domino theory as a global explanation of action.

Finally, one could easily integrate into this globalism many results of the new cultural history, as far as it deals with "Americanization," the global spread of the "American way of life" during the Cold War. In doing so, it seems useful to me to distinguish between two things: first, "Americanization from above," that is, the attempts by state and

state-directed actors to use Americanization and homogenization of the non-communist world as a weapon in the Cold War.⁷ This can then be contrasted with “Sovietization” on the other side. Konrad Jarausch and Hannes Sigrist, in an important anthology, have made this contrasting of Americanization and Sovietization their leitmotif.⁸ Second, “Americanization from below,” that is, the cross-border influence of non-state actors, especially in the field of mass and popular culture, against which, for example, even in the GDR there was no defense.

The non-communist world became, in varying densities, part of a security, value, production, consumption, information, leisure, travel, fun, and entertainment community under American hegemony, not American domination. Hegemony is to be understood here as tamed power, as predominant influence. As a result, the states and societies affected by American hegemony were left with considerable freedom and decision-making latitude. “Empire by Invitation” or “Empire by Integration,” as the Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad has called this state of affairs.⁹

This brings me to the problem of globalism in Soviet foreign policy, but with some hesitation, since, as I do not speak Russian, my analysis depends on the scholarly literature in Western languages, such as the books by Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Vojtech Mastny, Edvard Radzinsky, and Norman Naimark.¹⁰ So, in case of doubt, I cannot consult the primary sources myself. For this very reason, the

7 See Michael J. Hogan (ed.), *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Policy in the American Century*, New York 1999; Peter Duignan / L. H. Gann, *The Rebirth of the West. The Americanization of the Democratic World, 1945–1958*, Lanham, Md. 1996; Rob Kroes, *If You’ve Seen One, You’ve Seen the Mall. Europeans and American Mass Culture*, Urbana 1996. On the cultural influence of the U.S. on Germany, see now Detlef Junker (ed.), *Die USA und Deutschland im Zeitalter des Kalten Krieges, Ein Handbuch*, vol. 1, 1945–1968; vol. 2, 1968–1990, Stuttgart / Munich 2001; therein especially the chapters on culture and society.

8 Konrad Jarausch / Hannes Sigrist (eds.), *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland, 1955–1970*, Frankfurt-Main / New York 1997.

9 Geir Lundestad, “Empire” by Integration. *The United States and European Integration, 1945–1997*, Oxford 1998; eds, *Empire by Integration? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952*, in: *Journal of Peace Research* 23, September 1986, pp. 263–277.

10 Vladislav Zubok / Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge, MA, 1996; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years*, New York 1996; Edvard Radzinsky, *Stalin: The First In-Depth Biography Based on Explosive New Documents from Russia’s Secret Archives*, New York 1996; Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949*, Cambridge, MA 1995.

translations within the framework of the Cold War International Project are also of great importance to me. I also owe a lot to my Heidelberg colleague, the Eastern European historian Heinz-Dietrich Löwe. I have just reviewed his new biography of Stalin, which will be published in the fall of 2001, for the series “*Persönlichkeit und Geschichte*” (Personality and History), of which I am the editor. Through many conversations with the author I have, I hope, sharpened my judgment of the Soviet system under Stalin, or Stalinism.¹¹

In contrast to American hegemony, Stalin’s sphere of power was characterized not only by domination but by the rule of systematic terror. Since the end of the twenties, Stalin established as a principle, with enormous energy and manpower, a coolly calculated, carefully planned reign of terror, that precisely took into account the respective constellations of forces, was absolutely insensitive to any human suffering, and sadistically enjoyed the mass murders. If one takes the dignity of the individual and his physical integrity as the political-moral standard, then the terrorist mass murderer Stalin stands on a level with Hitler and Mao. Bukharin, alluding to Stalin, rightly spoke of a “Genghis Khan culture of the Central Committee” as early as 1928.¹² On a single day, December 12, 1938, Stalin and Molotov personally sanctioned the execution of 3167 people. Afterwards, they relaxed with American movies, which, of course, the common people were not allowed to watch.¹³ Terror and repression, permanent class struggle, and periodic purges were, when he had the opportunity, Stalin’s political “modus operandi,” both in domestic and foreign policy. The endlessly distrustful Stalin only accepted restrictions on his power, on his dictatorial despotism, when the constellations of forces at home or abroad, which he analyzed with great concentration, though often incorrectly, made it seem opportune to him. Where he suspected weakness and weakening resistance, he immediately reverted to his modus operandi.

In Stalin’s world view, there was no legitimate countervailing power, not even legitimate hegemony. The basic American position, within the framework of indivisible freedom on the western periphery of the Soviet Union, of supporting governments friendly to the Soviet Union, but which had at the same time resulted from free elections—i.e., of granting him hegemony and not domination—was for him a deceitful, capitalist conspiracy. The often-described gradualism

11 Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *Stalin. Terror als System*, Göttingen 2001.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

of the Sovietization of the states and societies of Eastern and Central Europe from 1945–1948 was, from Stalin’s point of view, a tactical variant of a cautious Soviet foreign policy in Europe that analyzed the respective constellation of forces in terms of *realpolitik*, but was nevertheless expansive. Its most important goal was its influence on all of Germany. “The whole of Germany must become ours,” Stalin declared to the Yugoslav delegation in the spring of 1946, according to Milovan Djilas.¹⁴ The countervailing power formation of the West within the framework of the famous policy of double containment and the Westward integration of the Federal Republic were therefore a heavy blow for Stalin and his successors: also because all attempts by the Soviet Union to prevent precisely that ultimately failed.

In addition, Soviet expansionism, which manifested itself either only in demands or also in political-military actions, was directed at Tangier, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. An almost classic case of cautious expansionism was Stalin’s tactics on the straits issue (Dardanelles and Bosphorus). After initially demanding of the reluctant Foreign Minister Molotov, “Go ahead, apply pressure,” Stalin dropped his demand when Truman moved the U.S. fleet into the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁵ Cautious Soviet expansionism is also unmistakable in East Asia; one need only recall Korea, which I will discuss in another context.

What does all this mean for the question of Soviet globalism? Stalin’s Soviet Union did not see itself as a global power in actual policy, even if Stalin believed in the goal of world revolution and probably died as a “believer.” This statement holds true regardless of the endlessly debated question of whether Stalin’s cautious expansionism arose from Great Russian traditions, world revolutionary communist ideology, *realpolitik* considerations, or a combination of these motives. The expansionist ambitions of the latent Eurasian ruling power were limited to Eurasia, which American globalism could only accept *de facto*, never morally. Communist world revolution was not a part of operational policy under Stalin; Stalin did not want to risk a third world war either.

It was only under Khrushchev that the Soviet Union went from being a Eurasian power to one with global reach. This was particularly evident in the USSR’s increasing activity in the Middle East, in the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

developing countries of Asia and Africa, and finally even in the US's inner sanctum, Latin America. The only politician who ever attempted the policy of "roll back" on a grand scale after the Korean War was Khrushchev. The Berlin crisis was also intended to undermine the U.S. position in Western Europe, and the Cuban Missile Crisis was also intended to force strategic parity with the United States.¹⁶

Finally, I would venture the thesis that the end of the *détente* in the middle of Carter's term and the Second Cold War were due to the competing globalism of the two superpowers.

This brings me to my second global avenue, which is to ask, in line with new approaches, such as those of Odd Arne Westad, Tony Smith, and others, to what extent Third World leaders, elites, and ideologies in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa, long considered objects of superpower politics, pawns in the Cold War, need not be seen as independent actors who globalized, intensified, and prolonged the Cold War for their own motives. This, it seems to me, is a new paradigm of the last decade that Tony Smith has recently articulated in an essay titled "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War," and introduced with a popular American proverb: "In battle, it's not the size of the dog that matters, but his will to fight."¹⁷

Especially the long duration of the Cold War and the inability to end it after the policy of *détente* in Europe could only be understood if one made the Third World a causally significant aspect of the Cold War. In this respect, I would have to relativize my own thesis of the competing globalism of both superpowers as the cause for the end of the *détente*.

Mind you, this approach goes beyond the question, also increasingly explored in the recent history of Cold War international relations, of what influence and room for maneuver the junior partners actually possessed within the undisputed American hegemonic or Soviet sphere of domination. To personalize this question: To what degree, for

16 On the connection between the Cuban and Berlin Crises, see especially John C. Ausland, *Kennedy, Krushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961–1964*, Oslo / Boston 1996; Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars. Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, New York 2000; Ernest R. May / Philip D. Zelikow (eds.), *The Kennedy Tapes. Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Cambridge, Mass. 1997.

17 Tony Smith, *New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War*, in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 24, no. 4, Fall 2000, pp. 567–591. Cf. the Bernath Lecture by Odd Arne Westad in the same issue: *The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms*, pp. 551–565.

example, were the Briton Ernest Bevin, the French Charles de Gaulle, the Germans Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Walter Ulbricht, and Erich Honecker, the Pole Władysław Gomułka, the Romanian Nicolae Ceausescu, and the Czechoslovakian Alexander Dubček actors of the Cold War who at least helped to determine its course?

Take General Charles de Gaulle, for example: the French president, the self-proclaimed embodiment of “eternal France,” always envisioned a Europe under French leadership that would achieve parity vis-à-vis the two superpowers. When all de Gaulle’s plans to be included as an equal partner in a U.S.-France-U.K. nuclear directorate failed because of opposition from the “Anglo-Saxons,” France took the liberty in 1963 of denying Britain access to the European Economic Community, shocking the U.S. and its allies in NATO with the decision, to withdraw French forces from the integrated NATO alliance in 1966, to demand the withdrawal of all American troops from French soil, to undermine the American-dominated Bretton Woods monetary system, and to make a futile attempt to unilaterally bind the Federal Republic to France through the *Élysée Treaty*.¹⁸ These were options of which the West German politicians did not even dare to dream.

On the other hand, it is worth remembering Walter Ulbricht, Erich Honecker, and the GDR, for example. “Moscow alone decided on the foreign and German policy of the SED leadership,” according to a recent summary by Martin Sabrow.¹⁹ Just imagine if John F. Kennedy had spoken to de Gaulle the way Leonid Brezhnev spoke to Honecker: “Erich, I tell you frankly, never forget this: the GDR cannot exist without us, without the Soviet Union, its power and strength. Without us, there is no GDR.”²⁰

As I said, the new approach goes beyond this and asks, how Josip Broz Tito, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, Nasser, and Ben Gurion; how the states, societies, and

18 Cf. e.g., Robert Paxton / Nicholas Wahl (eds.), *De Gaulle and the United States. A Centennial Reappraisal*, Oxford 1994; Georges-Henri Soutou, *L’alliance incertaine. Les rapports politico-stratégique franco-allemands, 1954–1996*, Paris 1996; Eckart Conze, *Dominanzanspruch und Partnerschaftsrhetorik: Die Bundesrepublik im Spannungsfeld von amerikanischer und französischer Politik 1945–1990*, in: Detlef Junker (ed.), *Die USA und Deutschland im Zeitalter des Kalten Krieges*, vol. 2, 1968–1990, pp. 88–99.

19 Martin Sabrow, *Die DDR im nationalen Gedächtnis*, in: Jörg Baberowski / Eckart Conze / Philipp Gassert / Martin Sabrow, *Geschichte ist immer Gegenwart*, Stuttgart / Munich 2001, p. 101.

20 Cited in: Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro*, Berlin 1991, p. 281.

ideologies they represented can be integrated in a new way into an overall interpretation of the Cold War. The question, then, is not how they can find their place in a general post-1945 world history or in the history of decolonization. What this new pericentric approach has in mind could be demonstrated by two examples, Kim Il Sung and Fidel Castro.

We all know the enormous significance of the Korean War for the Cold War. It expanded the conflict into East Asia, revolutionized U.S. foreign policy, and the “fall-out” from the Korean War was global. We now know that the driving force for the expansion southward beyond the 38th parallel was not Stalin, but Kim Il Sung. Forty-eight telegrams are said to have been sent by Kim Il Sung to the reluctant Stalin before the latter finally gave the green light for the invasion of South Korea in early 1950; but only after Stalin had also obtained Mao’s consent and after he had satisfied himself that the U.S. would not intervene. Thus, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union nor China would have caused the spillover of the Cold War into East Asia, where it became the Hot War, but rather a charismatic, nationalist, and communist leader of a comparatively small country.²¹

According to the pericentric approach, the same is true for Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. The favorite idea of leftist, revisionist historiography, that American imperialism drove Fidel Castro into the arms of communism and the Soviet Union, is quite wrong. On the contrary, Castro’s ego had been big enough to see himself as an independent revolutionary force who wanted to revolutionize Latin America on his own initiative and then, with the help of his troops and advisers, parts of Africa as well. Finally, it was Castro who recommended to Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis that he launch a nuclear attack against the United States if that country attempted to invade Cuba again.

A precise analysis of Nasser’s policy or that of various Israeli statesmen comes to similar conclusions. They were not pawns of the superpowers, but used and intensified the Cold War for their own purposes. When the U.S. once again protested in vain that Tel Aviv had broken an agreement with the U.S., Menachem Begin replied: “No one will

21 Cf. The Cold War in Asia, in: Bulletin Cold War International History Project, Issues 6–7, Winter 1995/1996. Cf. also The Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Détente in the 1970s, in: *ibid*, Issues 8–9, Winter 1996/1997; Kathryn Weathersby, The Korean War Revisited, in: *The Wilsons Quarterly* 23 (Summer 1999), pp. 91–97.

bring Israel to its knees. You seem to have forgotten that the Jews kneel only before God.”²²

This brings me to my third global leitmotif, which does not focus on overarching structures but attempts to interpret 1968, the *annus mirabilis*, as a global turning point in the Cold War, and its main events as an interdependent context of effects: The Tet Offensive, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Mao’s first opening to the U.S., the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, the political reaction of the oil states to the Six-Day War, the U.S. payments, and gold crises. The year 1968 was, according to the hypothesis, a decisive upheaval in the history of world politics and the beginning of a crisis in the world economy at the same time.²³

On January 30, 1968, the year began with a bang, with the Tet Offensive by guerrilla fighters, Viet Cong terrorist commandos, and also regular units of the North Vietnamese against American troops and their South Vietnamese allies. This had dramatic consequences for the United States. The Tet Offensive shook the American home front, and a resigned President Johnson decided not to run again. More importantly, the Tet Offensive forced U.S. strategists to rethink not only their objectives in Vietnam, but their role in the Cold War and thus their role in world politics. The validity of two hallowed maxims of American world politics, the Truman Doctrine, and the Domino Theory, was, as “we now know,” at issue at the center of power itself. Ironically, it was the founding fathers of the Cold War—Dean Acheson, Clark Clifford, Paul Nitze, and Averell Harriman—who urged Johnson to change course. By March 1968, these so-called “wise men” saw no alternative to a phased withdrawal from Vietnam. They advised the president to confine himself to U.S. strategic interests in Europe, Japan, the Middle East, and Latin America. This *realpolitik* intrusion into the Manichean worldview of the Cold War prepared the subsequent reorientation of Nixon and Kissinger’s *détente* policy. Confronted with an unwinnable Vietnam War, Nixon and Kissinger, beginning in 1969, sought to overcome the containment ideology of the Cold War bipolar order and substitute in its place a new, pentagonal world order that would include the Soviet Union, China, Europe, and Japan.

22 Smith, *New Bottles for New Wine*, p. 587.

23 The following remarks are based on the first attempt to interpret 1968 as a global turning point in domestic and foreign policy terms: Carole Fink / Philipp Gassert / Detlef Junker (eds.), 1968. *The World Transformed*, New York 1998.

Johnson was not ready for this in March 1968; he himself continued to think in terms of the Munich analogy and did not want to go down in history as the “new Chamberlain.” Bitterly, he lamented the advice of wise men: “The establishment bastards have jumped ship.”²⁴

World economic constraints pointed in the same direction. For in the same year, 1968, U.S. imperial overextension became apparent. The country’s growing balance of payments deficit was undermining the stability of the Bretton Woods international monetary system. Johnson could not simultaneously finance the war in Vietnam and his war on poverty at home because Congress was unwilling to raise taxes. During the dramatic gold crisis of March 1968, the exchange rate mechanism could be provisionally restored (also with German help), but its end came in the wake of the oil crisis, whose origins went back to 1968, when the Arab states—in reaction to the Seven-Day War of 1967—began to develop a new strategy: oil as a weapon.

While the American domino theory lost its plausibility and legitimacy in Vietnam, the Soviet domino theory led the tanks and troops of the Eastern Bloc to Prague in August 1968. With the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Brezhnev Doctrine, which forbade the states of the socialist camp to go their own way in foreign and domestic policy, the Soviet Union sought to cement the status quo in Europe. The astonishingly quick acceptance by the West of this coup d’état and the treaty with the Soviet Union on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons signed earlier in 1968—perhaps the most important treaty of the Cold War—were important preconditions for the Soviet Union’s policy of détente in Europe and the treaties with the East. The West, as the Soviets saw it, had once again de facto recognized the territorial status quo in Central Europe and, with Soviet help, had finally made the Federal Republic a nuclear have-not.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of global interdependence in the watershed year of 1968, however, as we now know from Nancy Bernkopf Tucker’s research,²⁵ was Mao’s reaction to Tet and Prague. Mao feared that Brezhnev would apply his doctrine to East Asia and send Soviet troops into the disputed northern border regions against China, which had been weakened by the Cultural Revolution. According to Tucker, the Prague invasion was an important motive both to end the Great Proletarian Revolution and to look for a new ally. In

24 Ibid, p. 4.

25 Ibid, pp. 193–218.

accordance with the ancient Chinese wisdom that barbarians must be used to control barbarians, only a barbarian who could possibly neutralize the power of the Soviet Union was an option, namely the United States. China's invitation to the United States in November 1968 to resume talks in Warsaw was the beginning of the road that led to the revolution in U.S.-China relations, culminating in Nixon's sensational visit to China in 1972.

So 1968 should not only be seen as a cipher for a deep cut in the internal politics of many societies in the First, Second, and Third Worlds, but also for a turning point in what I would like to call the Cold World War. For that, in the first place, is the larger meaning of my brief contribution. We should replace the term "Cold War" with the term "Cold World War" to make more visible the globality and global interdependencies of this Third World War of the Twentieth Century. If that seems plausible, I could have given my paper a different title: From Cold War to Cold World War: A New Understanding of International Relations.

